

Many English folk tales have doubtless been lost because no one made a serious attempt to collect them until railroads; newspapers, and popular education had greatly changed the life of the English folk and destroyed many of the traditions. For the preservation of many folk tales that we have, English-speaking peoples are indebted to the scholarly antiquarian James Orchard Halliwell (afterwards Halliwell-Phillips, 1820-1889), who in the year 1842 edited a collection of *The Nursery Rhymes of England* for the Percy Society. He followed it a few years later with *Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales*. They have long been regarded as the basic books in their field. These two collections were reprinted as *Nursery Rhymes and Tales*. This one-volume edition is the one referred to in the following pages. Halliwell should be remembered as the first person to collect in a scientific way the folk literature of England. He gathered these rhymes and tales from the mouths of the folk, from chapbooks, and from many other sources and endeavored to tell them as they had been told by the folk.

"The Old Woman and Her Pig" is perhaps the most familiar of all nursery stories. It belongs to the type of story known as the "accumulative," of which "The House That Jack Built" is the purest model. In such a story there is a constant repetition of the plot, with an addition or slight change at each repetition, until at the end there is a quick unwinding which carries us back to the initial situation and solves the difficulty with which the story started. Halliwell gives two versions of this particular story. It is so widespread that many slight variations would be expected in successful retellings of it. The traditional version which follows seems to be the favorite with primary teachers. It introduces at the sixth stage the attractive rhyme "I see by the moonlight, etc.," which originally formed part of another nursery tale.

THE OLD WOMAN AND HER PIG

Once upon a time, an old woman was sweeping her little house, when, to her great joy, she found a silver sixpence.

"What," said she, "shall I do with this little sixpence? I think I will go to market and buy a pig." So the next day, she went to market, and bought a nice little white pig. She tied a string to one of the pig's legs, and began to drive him home.

On the way, the old woman and her pig came to a stile, and she said,—

"Please, pig, get over the stile."

But the pig would not.

Just then a little dog came trotting up, and the old woman said to him,—

"Dog, dog, bite pig;

Pig won't get over the stile,

And I sha'n't get home to-night."

But the dog would not.

So the old woman held up her stick, and said,—

"Stick, stick, beat dog;

Dog won't bite pig;

Pig won't get over the stile,

And I sha'n't get home to-night."

But the stick would not.

So the old woman gathered some bits of wood together to make a fire, and set them on fire, and then threw her stick into the fire, and said,—

"Fire, fire, burn stick;

Stick won't beat dog;

Dog won't bite pig;

Pig won't get over the stile,

And I sha'n't get home to-night."

But the fire would not.

So the old woman fetched a pail of water that was standing near, and said,—

"Water, water, quench fire;
Fire won't burn stick;
Stick won't beat dog;
Dog won't bite pig;
Pig won't get over the stile,
And I sha'n't get home to-night."
But the water would not.

Then the old woman saw an ox coming; so she said, —

"Ox, ox, drink water;
Water won't quench fire;
Fire won't burn stick;
Stick won't beat dog;
Dog won't bite pig;
Pig won't go.
I see by the moonlight,
It's long past midnight;
Time pig and I were home an hour and
a half ago."
But the ox would not.

So the old woman turned round, and saw a butcher, and she said, —

"Butcher, butcher, kill ox;
Ox won't drink water;
Water won't quench fire;
Fire won't burn stick;
Stick won't beat dog;
Dog won't bite pig;
Pig won't go.
I see by the moonlight,
It's long past midnight;
Time pig and I were home an hour and
a half ago."
But the butcher would not.

So the old woman took a rope out of her pocket, and said, —

"Rope, rope, hang butcher;
Butcher won't kill ox;
Ox won't drink water;
Water won't quench fire;
Fire won't burn stick;

Stick won't beat dog;
Dog won't bite pig;
Pig won't go.
I see by the moonlight,
It's long past midnight;
Time pig and I were home an hour and
a half ago."
But the rope would not.

Just then a large brown mouse ran across the meadow, and she said, —

"Mouse, mouse, gnaw rope;
Rope won't hang butcher;
Butcher won't kill ox;
Ox won't drink water;
Water won't quench fire;
Fire won't burn stick;
Stick won't beat dog;
Dog won't bite pig;
Pig won't go.
I see by the moonlight,
It's long past midnight;
Time pig and I were home an hour and
a half ago."
"Yes," said the mouse, "I will if you
will give me some cheese."

So the old woman put her hand in her pocket, and found a nice piece of cheese; and when the mouse had eaten it,

The mouse began to gnaw the rope,
The rope began to hang the butcher,
The butcher began to kill the ox,
The ox began to drink the water,
The water began to quench the fire,
The fire began to burn the stick,
The stick began to beat the dog,
The dog began to bite the pig,
And the pig began to go.

But what time the old woman and her pig got home, you, nor I, nor nobody knows.